



Testimony of Michele Devine, Executive Director of the Southeastern Regional Action Council (SERAC)

concerning funding for Regional Action Councils

Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services – February 23, 2017

Senator Gerratana, Representative Dillon, Senator Somers and members of the Appropriations subcommittee, my name is Michele Devine and I am the Executive Director of the Southeastern Regional Action Council (SERAC). I am offering testimony in strong opposition to the proposed cuts to the regional action councils across the state.

I am here to tell you that no one else is doing the work that we are doing day in and day out. To eliminate these funds would take away the work being done at the local level.

Our legislative mandate is to develop and coordinate Substance abuse and mental health services in our region and across the state. We work tirelessly to link state, regional and local initiatives.

There are no other agencies, going and presenting at the Law Enforcement Councils to get police departments to place prescription drop box in their lobby.

No other agencies are talking to pharmacist encouraging them to carry Naloxone or to register and become trained to prescribe Naloxone.

No other agencies are having one on one conversations with police departments to encourage them to carry Naloxone and help pass policies and procedures to do so.

No other agencies are checking to make sure electronic cigarette vendors have the proper license to carry and sell. Of the stores we checked, we had a 75% failure rate. We are also checking their compliance or lack of compliance in selling to minors.

No other agencies are being called by churches, schools, community agencies to do suicide prevention and awareness workshops. Doing on average 2 per month.

The RAC's are the agencies that connect all the different sectors together. To help you understand the value of our work I will share this.

How Prevention is like a Spider Web:

Spider Webs can be hard to see. Prevention work is often behind the scenes. It can be hard to see the results but it is there.

To Last, a web needs to be attached to many places. Effective prevention needs to involve multiple community partners.

Spiders spend long hours creating and repairing their intricate webs. Effective prevention take time to work. Plans need to be re-evaluated and may need to be readjusted to get from point A to B.

Spider webs can be very complicated. Prevention approaches problems from many angles and the best prevention plans have multiple inter-related parts.

When they are made correctly, a web is very effective in accomplishing its task. We have worked in prevention science for over 20 years. We know Prevention works! We have seen the benefits and the change in our communities.

I urge you to strongly consider restoring the amount cut for the RAC's. The partnerships between highly motivated and dedicated personnel in the RAC's and our community partners are changing the way we "work" and changing the future.

Sincerely,

Michele Devine

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